

25<sup>th</sup> August

Jesus saith unto him,

**I am the way, the truth, and the life:**

no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 14:6

We looked at what the words “way” and “truth” mean in this verse in the two previous lessons. Today we can consider Jesus as “life.” “He did not say He can show you life, but He IS the life. He is the creator, not the created...” says one writer.<sup>1</sup> We all owe our very existence to the Lord Jesus Christ. We all have immortal souls. We will not just pass out of existence when we come to the end of our lives. Jesus is telling his disciples about his coming death in this passage but here he says “I am... the life.” this is not a contradiction for Jesus rose from the dead! If we are truly trusting in Jesus, death will have no power over us either: “...because I live, ye shall live also” said Jesus in this passage.(John 14:19)

Something to read: two ground-breaking journeys<sup>2</sup>

Two very different journeys today. Get out your atlas and **find the places** to follow the adventures.

On **25<sup>th</sup> August** 1916 an ancient sea-going tug, the *Yelcho*, property of the government of **Chile**, put to sea, captained by Captain Luis Pardo and carrying explorer Ernest Shackleton.<sup>3</sup> In order to borrow her Shackleton had had to promise not to take her into any sea-ice for she would not stand it – even heavy seas might be risky – but this was Shackleton's fourth attempt to reach his objective and he was desperate. But where the ice had earlier defeated the various vessels he had begged and borrowed, the plucky *Yelcho* *succeeded*. Five days later Shackleton reached his destination, **Elephant Island**, which you will find if you look at a map of the **Antarctic** in your atlas, a tiny speck off the Antarctic Peninsula.

Shackleton was desperate to reach this inhospitable and lonely spot because twenty-two of his men were stranded there!

The previous year had seen a disaster for Shackleton. Pack ice in the **Weddell Sea** had sunk his ship *Endurance*, leaving Shackleton and his 27 fellow arctic explorers adrift on an ice floe. They drifted northward until April 1916. Then the floe on which they were camped broke up. Using the ships boats which had been saved from the *Endurance*; they managed to escape to Elephant Island. But here they would remain forever, living off seals and limpets unless someone went for help from outside. There was no other way of communicating with the outside world. Shackleton decided to sail one of the boats with a small crew to **South Georgia** where there were whaling stations to get help.



The ship's carpenter strengthened and adapted the most seaworthy of the little boats, the *James Caird*, to enable it to stand up to the seas of the Southern Ocean. He improvised a deck from wood and canvas and made it watertight with an unlikely mixture of lamp wick, oil

1 G. Fawcett

2 Image from By The Flight magazine archive from Flightglobal, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17464877> Information from Alfred Lansing, *Endurance* (London, 1959) and other sources.

3 For more about this explorer see the lessons for 16<sup>th</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> June.

paint and seal blood. Shackleton and his intrepid crew said farewell to the twenty-two men who were to remain on the island and set sail.

After 17 dangerous and harrowing days the little boat reached South Georgia without capsizing. They arrived on the south side of South Georgia. The whaling stations were on the north side. Shackleton realised the *James Caird* would not survive the attempt to sail round the rocky coast. No one had ever cross the mountains and glaciers of the South Georgian interior before but there was no other alternative. Three of the men were so weak that Shackleton realised they could never cross the mountains. He made them as comfortable as he could with the upturned *James Caird* for shelter. Then he, Tom Crean and Frank Worsley set off.

They had no adequate maps to guide them and not even any proper climbing rope but they made it. Even without any of the other adventures they had been through, that crossing would have gone down in the history of mountaineering and exploration. When they arrived at the whaling station the men who greeted them were incredulous – and overjoyed for Shackleton and his men were believed to have been lost at sea.

But now the southern winter with its terrible ice set in. It was three months more before Shackleton could even try to reach the men at Elephant Island. When the men there saw the *Yelcho* approaching they could hardly believe it for they had begun to give up all hope of rescue. As soon as Shackleton, in the *Yelcho's* boat, was within shouting distance of his men he yelled “Are you all right?” to which they gave the reply he had longed to hear “All well!”

Quickly the men were ferried onto the tug.

“I stayed on deck to watch Elephant Island recede in the distance... “ wrote one of the men who had tried to hoist his jacket on an oar as a signal to the *Yelcho* when it was sighted, “I could still see my Burberry [jacket] flapping in the breeze on the hillside – no doubt it will flap there to the wonderment of gulls and penguins till one of our familiar [gales] blows it all to ribbons.”



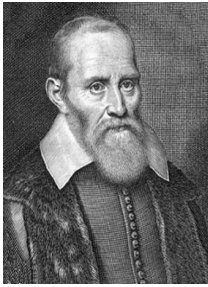
\*\*\*



Three years later, on **25<sup>th</sup> August** 1919, Air Transport & Travel (AT&T) flew the first flight of its daily air service from London to Paris. This was the first regular daily international air service in the world. The aircraft used were ex First World War planes adapted for passenger use with “cabins through the side of which passengers can see easily...”.

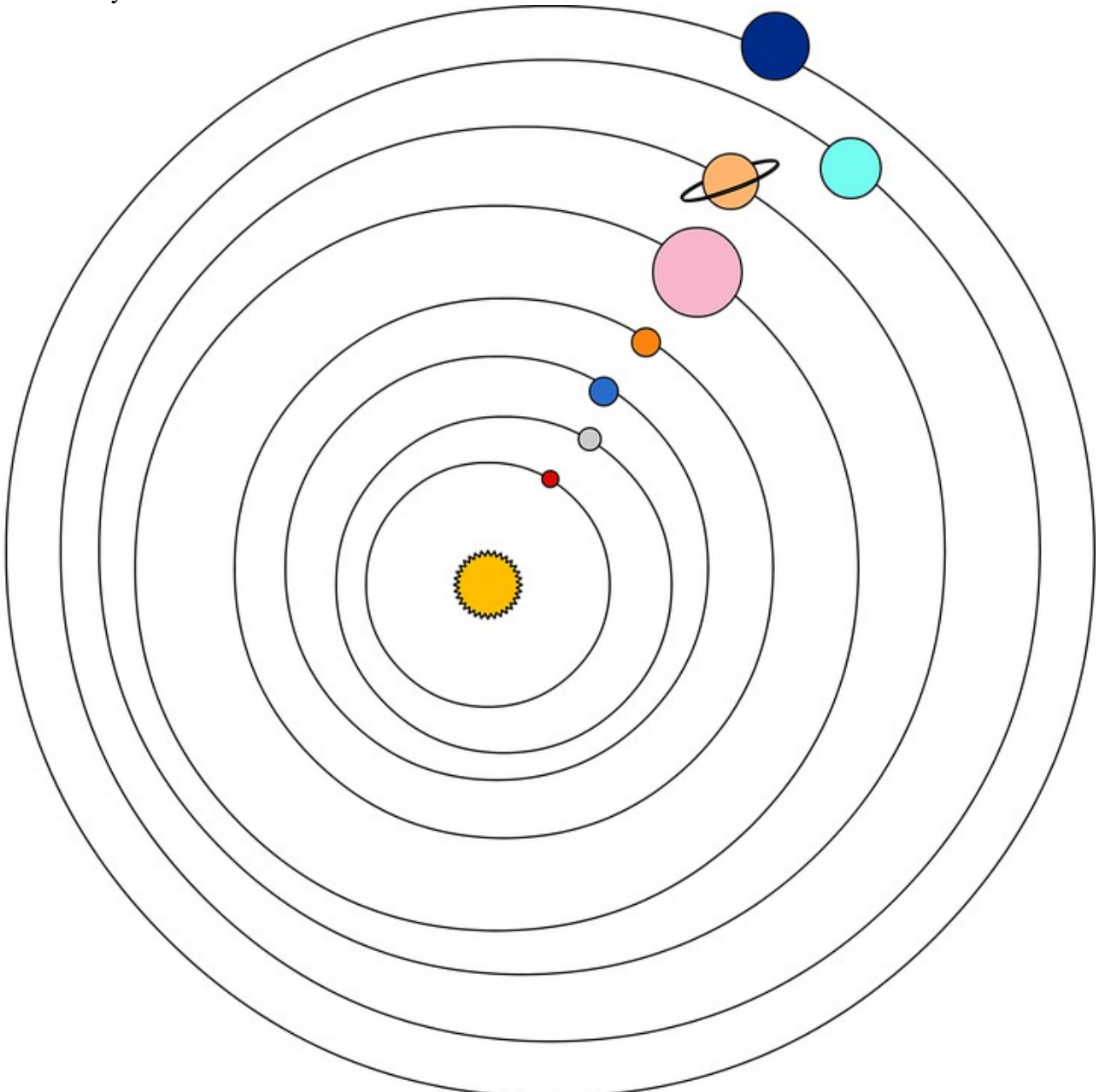
The planes operated between **Hounslow Heath** and **Le Bourget** and the flight took two and a half hours. The passengers on that first trip were mostly journalists and the cost of the flight was £21 – a very large sum in those days. If you get out your atlas and find the distance between the two places you can calculate roughly how fast the plane flew.

Something to read from science history



If you have been doing these lessons for some time you may remember the moral emblem poems of the Dutch poet Jacob Cats.<sup>4</sup> One of his friends about whom he wrote poems was the Dutch mathematician, astronomer and pastor Johan Philip Lansberge (1561 –1632) who was born on 25<sup>th</sup> August.

Lansberge made a number of achievements in mathematics and astronomy but perhaps the most interesting is his popularising of the heliocentric model of the solar system among his countrymen. What does that mean? The diagram below will show you.



It means the sun is at the centre of the solar system and the planets move or revolve around it.

Can you name the planets on the diagram?<sup>5</sup>

✂ \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>4</sup> See the lesson for 10<sup>th</sup> November.

<sup>5</sup> Answer: Starting from the nearest to the sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune.

Some people in Lansberge's native Netherlands were doubtful about accepting this theory. They were worried that, since the Bible speaks of the sun rising and setting, to consider that the earth revolved around the sun rather than the sun round the earth must be a mistaken idea. The Bible here is using what is called “phenomenological language” – as we do ourselves when we talk of sun rise and sun set. When we talk of the sunset we do not mean to imply that the earth is stationary and nor did the Bible writers – or perhaps we should say nor did God for perhaps the Bible writers themselves did not fully understand this aspect of what they wrote!



“But what about Psalm 96” someone might have asked him, “doesn't it say in verse 10 that the world shall not be moved?” Pastor Lansberge reassured his people. I'm sure he was able to explain very well how the Psalmist was referring to the kind of movement we feel when something is tottering or slipping, not the ordered movements of the planets in God's solar system. He wrote:

... the first heaven is that of the planets; it stretches from the sun in the centre up to the orb of Saturn.<sup>6</sup> The second heaven is that of the fixed stars; it stretches from the orb of Saturn up to the eighth sphere, that of the fixed stars. The third heaven is the **empyrean** heaven, the throne of God and the place reserved for the Elect. This heaven is invisible to us, but we know about it from spiritual revelation [That is, the Bible.] .... The immense space of the second heaven is not empty. It is full of 'a host of invisible creatures'. Angels descend from the third to the first heaven, or return in the inverse direction.... Moreover, the two inner heavens can only function because of the force [from the Spirit of God] they receive from the third heaven...

I don't think any of that contradicts what we know today – or what the Bible tells us! Do you know what empyreal means?

Lansberge's other great achievement was in the area of  $\pi$ . You can read about that in the lesson for 5<sup>th</sup> March.

---

<sup>6</sup> Planets beyond Saturn had not been discovered yet.